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OPINION

THE RECORD

Never again?

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Wednesday, April 27, 2005

THE BOTTOM line on the genocide in Darfur is that the killing continues. And the world continues to look away and do nothing.

Earlier this month, the United Nations says, hundreds of attackers swept through the village of Khor Abeche, "killing, burning and destroying everything in their paths." Did anyone notice?

The only solution that can stop the atrocities is concerted action by the world community. Instead, there is only talk: of disinvestment in Sudan, of substantive sanctions, of sending in NATO troops. Sadly, the talk does not translate into action.

■ Example: Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick visited Sudan recently to call attention to the slaughter. That was a welcome move by the Bush administration. But Mr. Zoellick underestimated the gravity of the situation, saying the number of deaths range from 60,000 to 160,000.

The most credible estimate now is closer to 400,000. Even that number - representing those men, women and children who have been murdered and those who have died of starvation or disease - has not stirred world outrage.

■ The United States did not veto a Security Council resolution to try those responsible for genocide in Darfur in the International Criminal Court, a rare show of support for the court by the White House. But there is no one in Sudan to bring the attackers to justice. The Sudanese government is backing the militias that are waging the genocide.

■ Sen. Jon Corzine, D-N.J., won unanimous Senate approval last week for much-needed legislation that would add more African peacekeepers

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and provide logistical assistance, appoint a special U.S. envoy to press for sanctions against Sudan and send \$90 million in relief to the 2 million refugees who have been displaced.

But the measures, which are added to an Iraq war spending bill, must still be approved in the House and then ironed out in a House-Senate conference committee, where they may not survive.

At least Mr. Corzine and a handful of other senators of both parties have led a campaign to call the world's attention to the suffering in Darfur, insisting we cannot stand by and do nothing while an entire region is ravaged.

President Bush has done almost nothing. He hasn't spoken out publicly about Darfur, even in recent meetings with Tony Blair, Vladimir Putin or NATO leaders.

Imagine if he were as passionate about ending the killing, burning, torture and rape that is going on in Darfur as he is about Social Security "reform"?

The hard work of spreading awareness of the suffering in Darfur is being done by humanitarian groups, such as the New Jersey-based Darfur Rehabilitation Project, some college students and some religious groups. They hope the pressure for action will build from the grass roots up.

The outrage has to start somewhere. Otherwise, the savagery in Darfur will continue. The words "Never again" will become empty and meaningless. And humanity will be diminished.

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